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October 12, 1972

File Special Projects

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*Approved by
Phone to Hardy
10/24/72
ATH*

✓ Miss Eleanor Macdonald, Director of Epidemiology at the M. D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, has submitted to us an application for a grant to complete the processing of certain comprehensive data on cancer incidence in Texas. The amount is \$46,730.00 and a description of the work contemplated is enclosed. The data in question were collected under a grant obtained from the Regional Medical Program, an arm of HEW. A total of over \$1,500,000 had been spent collecting this data when support was terminated in June of 1969 (presumably because of a shortage of funds).

A request to CTR for funds to complete the work was rejected recently despite the strong support of Dr. Robert Hockett. I have been told that other projects were, for various reasons, given higher priorities but that the failure to fund was no reflection on Miss Macdonald's work.

Various government agencies have been unable or unwilling to supply funds to Miss Macdonald to complete the processing of this bank of data. However, several of these agencies seem anxious for Miss Macdonald to turn the data over to them for processing. Miss Macdonald would be quite willing to do this if she were confident the data would be properly handled. She does not have this confidence.

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The data collection has been completed as has some of the initial processing. The data bank includes every reported case of cancer occurring in 74 counties in Texas during a 23 year period. The 74 counties in five regions differ geographically, ethnically and industrially. These counties represent a population of over four million people, including a million Latins, an equal number of Negroes, and over two million non-Latin Caucasians.

The chief task remaining is the elimination of duplicate accessions (reported cases) occasioned by the fact that in some instances cancer patients have entered more than one hospital and in others individuals have experienced more than one cancer over a period of years. Information has been collected by name, address, disease, hospital, age, sex, race and marital status for each cancer patient.

Once the duplicate accessions are eliminated, analysis of the data will begin. Age-specific incidence rates for all cancers will be computed by ethnic group, sex and by region. These incidence rates will show high and low pockets of cancer.

Following the preparation of incidence rates for all cancer from 1944 to 1966, explanations will be sought for various patterns that emerge. Miss Macdonald has data on geographic, occupational, climatic, demographic, and industrial factors for the same five regions and feels reasonably confident that they will produce very interesting variations in cancer incidence.

She has given us a number of charts based on her data that report cancer incidence in Texas by region, sex and ethnic group. Attached is a chart showing cancer incidence in Texas for cancer of the upper respiratory tract as a whole, the esophagus, and the lung. Some obvious patterns are revealed. For example, the male Latins in Austin have the lowest rate of all male ethnic groups for lung cancer while the female Latins in Austin have the highest of the female rates. In fact, the Latin men in Austin, Harlingen, and El Paso have the three lowest rates of lung cancer while the Latin women in these areas have three of the five highest rates. Austin Anglos and Negroes have over four times the incidence of lung cancer among males as Austin Latins. But the exact converse is true of women. And the three Austin male groups, Latin, Negro and Anglo, are at the top of the scale

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for upper respiratory cancer while the Anglo and Latin women from Austin are at the bottom of the scale.

When the processing of this data bank is completed, Miss Macdonald expects to utilize it in many ways. She plans to publish numerous reports and articles and will also make the data available to other interested individuals. (Two articles already completed on melanoma and breast cancer are enclosed.) She has been asked by a major publishing house to write a book entitled Epidemiology of Cancer and would utilize the Texas data in this undertaking.

Eleanor Macdonald is a highly respected epidemiologist. She received the 1972 Myron Gordon Award of the International Pigment Cell Conference and I enclose a page from The Anderson Messenger describing this honor. She has been most helpful on several occasions in helping to develop statistics for litigation. Miss Macdonald is very knowledgeable, has a vast amount of statistical resource material available in her department, and has the staff and computer facilities to put this information in suitable form.

As you are aware, Miss Macdonald and Dr. Alban have received funding from the industry to collect data from death certificates from Houston, Texas, covering a thirty-year experience (1940-1969). They have recently placed on magnetic tape daily particulate readings from Houston for the years 1968-1969 for comparative purposes and manuscripts on this are currently in progress.

Dave and I are of the opinion that Miss Macdonald's project to complete the processing of the Texas data has considerable merit and believe that it will produce useful results. It is difficult to find comprehensive data on cancer incidence and it would seem important to have the computation of the data done by her. I would appreciate hearing from you in the near future concerning this special project.

Sincerely,



William W. Shinn

WWS/r

Enclosures

cc: Alexander Holtzman, Esq.
Lester Pollack, Esq.

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